

CHARACTER WITNESS

i took my two visiting daughters,
at that time 15 and 17,
to bukowski's 60th birthday party.

he was a perfect gentleman towards them.

when i went to the head
and they went to get a beer,
he even asked them if they had
their father's permission to drink beer.
(they did, but they probably would have,
even if they didn't.)

later, as everyone got drunk,
and after hours of everyone
hanging on his every belch,
bukowski was not a perfect gentleman
to everyone.

but he remained a perfect gentleman
to my daughters
and i later learned
that while i'd been in the other room
he'd made what must have been a special effort
to say nice things about their father to them.

THE DYNAMICS OF LITERARY RESPONSE

my wife wants me to clear out of the house
all the books of mine i gave her
and all the periodicals in which
work of mine appeared.

she is not splitting up with me.
she is just divorcing my writing.

ironically, the thing that has most confounded me
with the occasional other women in my life
is that they conclude from my poems
that i will never love them
the way i love my wife.

IF DIRK BOGARDE HAD NEVER BEEN BORN

the cinema could not have portrayed decadence.